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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND AMAR AL-HAKIM DISCUSS SECURITY,
SERVICES, AND US-IRAN RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: Amar al-Hakim, heir apparent to the leadership position of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), told the Ambassador on September 29 that his recent visit to Kuwait and discussions with other Gulf state officials revealed a new and reasonable attitude toward Iraq from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. After the Ambassador explained that we will encourage greater Iraqi focus on improvement in security and the delivery of public services in the coming months, Amar shot a thinly-veiled jab at ISCI's main rival, Moqtada al-Sadr and his Jaysh al-Mehdi (JAM), by stating that the GOI must crack down hard on armed groups that interfere in the provision of public services. He alleged that Sadrism meddling in Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission threatened to undermine that body's independence, which could affect the legitimacy of future elections. He urged resumed USG-Iran talks to reduce a perceived escalation of tension, and confided that Iranian officials claimed to be doing their part to lessen conflict and took at least partial credit for reducing JAM violence. He complained that last week's non-binding Senate action had led to an Iraqi public perception of a USG "project" to partition Iraq, and predicted it would hamper Iraqi efforts to create a federal system as the notion of federalism was now linked in the public mind with USG-mandated partition. End Summary.

Improved Security and Delivery of Services

[¶2.](#) (C) The Ambassador explained that his recent testimony and report before Congress had bought additional time for Iraqis to make real progress, and that in the coming six months we would be encouraging greater Iraqi focus on improvement in security and the delivery of public services. Joking that the Ambassador's Congressional appearance was akin to the Day of Judgment, Amar pointed out that the Ambassador and Gen. Petraeus had forgotten to note the important role played by the Shia Marja'iyah in helping to maintain social balance and restraint among the majority Shia community. The 36 year-old cleric intoned that Iraqi leaders must stop their bickering and move forward with a flexible approach to achieve their commitments and demonstrate to the Iraqi people that Iraq's leaders can deliver something more than quarrels and arguments. He referred positively to Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi's "Compact" (septel), stating that his points were workable. Iraqis now had a good opportunity to work together and "Iraq's friends" need to encourage all sides to proceed in this direction so that the Iraqi people can see progress. Noting that he had just returned from a productive trip to Kuwait in which he discussed the situation in Iraq with numerous Kuwaiti officials, Amar said he detected a new and reasonable attitude toward Iraq among Kuwaitis, and in Saudi Arabia and the UAE as evidenced by the Saudi commitment to open an embassy in Baghdad.

[¶3.](#) (C) On the issue of services, he said the energetic

chairman of the Baghdad municipality was a great improvement over his predecessors. Amar stated that in some areas there is a link between the presence of armed groups and the delivery of services. For example, the Minister of Education had told him that school construction contractors in Sadr City had been harassed by "an armed group" to the point that they suspended further work and returned their contract payments to the Minister, complaining that they could not continue work under the circumstances (we note that while Amar did not name this group, he was clearly referring to Moqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mehdi). He expressed optimism that the obstacle to progress posed by armed groups could be overcome, but the GOI must deal harshly with such groups and not rely on the groups themselves to issue freeze orders, since the groups can resume violence at any time. Sporting rimless eyeglasses, the garb of a tribal sheikh, and the distinctive black turban that identifies him as a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, al-Hakim stated that local communities and tribes must be involved in efforts to contain armed groups, but claimed that tribes and police chiefs in the southern provinces are unsure whether they will receive the same level of support from the GOI and MNF-I as tribes in western Iraq have received.

Sadrists Infesting the Electoral Commission

¶4. (C) Amar expressed concern over the true independence of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), noting a correlation between IHEC independence from political parties and the success of future elections. Complaining that current commission members were tied to political parties, he alleged that the current head of the IHEC executive office was close to the Sadrist Movement and had recently packed his

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office and others with fellow Sadrists, a development that could affect the legitimacy of future elections. He said the previous IHEC was broadly independent and competent, and he proposed that the IHEC either revert to its former method of selecting members and operate under UN auspices, or form a membership selection committee comprised of representatives of all political parties, who would act as checks on their colleagues.

Worried About U.S. - Iran Tension

¶5. (C) Raising another issue, Amar said all Iraqis are concerned about a perceived escalation in tension between the U.S. and Iran, and stated that Iraq and the region will pay the price of such conflict. He said his father Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, who is undergoing cancer treatment in Iran, had raised this issue with Iranian officials who claimed that they were doing their part to lower tension and had played a large role in reducing attacks by the Jaysh al-Mehdi. Amar opined that previous USG-Iran high-level dialogues has succeeded in reducing conflict, and suggested that further such dialogue take place if only on an unofficial basis. The Ambassador replied that we have seen no indications on the ground of an Iranian effort to promote stability and improve the security situation in Iraq. On the contrary, the recent arrest of an Iranian official in Suleimaniyah and the continued flow of Iranian weapons into Iraq show that Iran is not playing a helpful role here. We have seen that previous dialogues did not change Iran's conduct in Iraq, so it is hard to justify the need for more such meetings.

Partition Anxiety

¶6. (C) Raising the matter of last week's non-binding Senate resolution that proposed splitting Iraq into decentralized regions, Amar stated that the vote called for the "partition" of Iraq and created great embarrassment for Iraq's leaders, who favor a federal system but not partition. He complained

that the Senate action had led to an Iraqi public perception of a USG "project" to partition Iraq, and predicted it would hamper Iraqi efforts to create a federal system as the notion of federalism was now linked in the public mind with USG-mandated partition. The Ambassador explained that the Senate vote was non-binding, and that he had told Congress in his recent appearance that all Iraqis support a unified Iraq and are against partition, which would be a catastrophe resulting in widespread violence.

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